

May 31, 2005

Mr. Cliff Sears
Regulatory Compliance Coordinator
P.O. Box 878
Ephrata, WA 98823

Dear Mr. Sears:

Thank you for your public comment letter received on December 17, 2004, regarding Washington State's Water Quality Assessment for 2002/2004. The department received over 45 comment letters during this last review process and is appreciative of the time you took to review and comment on this assessment. We realize that there is an extensive amount of information in the Water Quality Assessment. The scrutiny given by you and other public reviewers has resulted in many changes and corrections that improved the accurateness of the final submittal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Quality Assessment is being submitted to EPA as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). EPA will only take approval action on Category 5 of the assessment, which represents the state's 303(d) list. The Water Quality Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>.

We appreciate your comments regarding temperature and total dissolved gas (TDG) listings on the Columbia River in relation to the Wanapum and Priest Rapids dams. Based on your comments, we asked staff in the Environmental Assessment Program to reassess the temperature listings you cited for several years rather than 2001, which as you note could be considered a drought year. Staff reassessed data from 2000 – 2003, with the following results.

Number of 7-day periods when the 7-day average temperature exceeded the criterion					
Site name	Criterion	2000	2001	2002	2003
WAN - Wanapum Forebay.	18 deg C	66	77	0	89
WANW - Wanapum Tailrace.	18 deg C	57	62	30	86
PRD - Priest Rapids Forebay	18 deg C	50	69	0	91
PRXW - Priest Rapids Downstream / Columbia River near Vernita Bridge.	20 deg C	0	0	0	39
PAQW - Pasco	20 deg C	10	13	13	44

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Even if we excluded data from the year 2001, there are still enough exceedances in other years to warrant the waterbody segments a Category 5 listing. We recognize your comments regarding the sources of temperature listings likely occurring upstream and also the factor of natural conditions. We have anticipated that EPA, who has the lead in a temperature TMDL for the Columbia River, would resolve the issue of sources and factoring in natural conditions during the development of the TMDL. Unfortunately, this effort appears to have stalled; nonetheless, we believe that ultimately a TMDL would help sort out the many complex temperature issues on the Columbia River.

Regarding TDG, a TMDL was approved on November 20, 2002 for the Lower Columbia River. Therefore, all TDG listings for this part of the Columbia River have moved from Category 5 to Category 4A.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide comments to Ecology. If you have questions regarding the above responses, or would like further clarification, please feel free to call me at 360-407-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Braley".

Susan Braley
Unit Supervisor
Watershed Management Section